

# NEWS RELEASE

## DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

### Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

---

---

Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations

245 McKee Road | Dover, DE 19904 | Office: 302.857.5232 | [jason.miller@delaware.gov](mailto:jason.miller@delaware.gov)

---

---

## DOC announces inmate death, eleven inmate recoveries and one new inmate test result

### *Inmate recoveries significantly outpace new cases over past six days*

Dover, DE -- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced that **Jim Hunter, Jr.**, an 81 year-old inmate with serious underlying health conditions from James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC), died on Sunday, May 10 at Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus from complications from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Diabetes, and COVID. **Hunter was part of a minimum security housing unit that has been closely monitored since April 8, with twice daily temperature checks and proactive COVID-19 testing of asymptomatic inmates. When Hunter was tested on April 13, he tested negative for COVID-19.** When Hunter was admitted to Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus on April 23 for non-COVID treatment, a second COVID-19 test was administered and was returned positive. Hunter's condition had deteriorated over the past several days and he had been receiving treatment in the Hospital's Intensive Care Unit.

Hunter, of Dover, has been in DOC custody since 2015 and was serving a 10-year sentence for Unlawful Sexual Contact With a Victim Under 13 Years and Sexual Abuse of a Child.

Hunter's body was released to the Delaware Division of Forensic Science.

The DOC also today announced **the number of inmate COVID recoveries have reached 55 - an increase of 11 recoveries since last Friday. Every inmate from Sussex Community Corrections Center who tested positive last month through a combination of proactive testing and testing of symptomatic individuals has now recovered from the illness.**

"Across our correctional system today, only 15 inmate COVID patients from only two facilities are experiencing symptoms of illness, while 60 inmates with positive test results, whose illness was caught early through close monitoring or were identified through proactive testing, are demonstrating no symptoms of illness and are continuing to be closely monitored in isolation at our COVID-19 treatment center," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** "It is important and encouraging to note that over the past six days the number of inmates recovering is significantly outpacing the number of new cases. DOC continues to aggressively test, isolate, treat and trace to prevent widespread contamination of this virus."

The DOC also today announced that one additional inmate and additional staff members have tested positive for COVID over the past three days. Review an informational chart of positive COVID-19 cases among DOC employees, contracted staff and inmates for each DOC facility [by clicking HERE](#). The latest positive test results are as follows:

- **One inmate from Howard R. Young Correctional Institution (HRYCI)** who was isolated and tested at the first reported symptom of illness and has been transferred to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center. The inmate, who today is not demonstrating any symptoms of illness, including a fever, [likely had contact with the source of the initial HRYCI inmate COVID case that was identified through contact tracing](#).
- **Two Correctional Officers assigned to JTVCC.** The Officers were last on duty 7 days ago - on May 4, and 6 days ago - on May 5, respectively. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officers began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed sought medical attention, at which time a COVID-19 test was administered. The Officers are continuing to self-isolate at home.
- **Six asymptomatic Correctional Officers assigned to HRYCI.** The Officers received positive COVID test results after participating in voluntary proactive testing last week. All six are self-isolating at home.

No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmate and officers for privacy protection.

The DOC is employing a variety of prevention, screening, cleaning and containment measures to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus, including:

- All persons, including Officers, administrative staff and probationers who enter any Level V prison, Level IV violation of probation or work release center, or Probation and Parole Office are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a thermometer
- Staff who present with symptoms are sent home to self-quarantine and directed to contact their health care provider.
- Newly arriving inmates are held in isolation for the first 14 days, during which they are carefully monitored, including daily temperature checks with a thermometer.
- DOC has implemented extra daily cleaning of DOC facilities and is using specialized fogging machines to disinfect entire rooms of common areas, housing units and workspaces.
- Face masks are being worn by Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers as a protection for inmates, Officers and other employees. All Correctional Officers have been wearing face masks since April 10.
- **Face masks have been provided to more than half of DOC's inmate population, including inmates who are in infirmaries, those with compromised immune systems, those with certain institutional jobs, such as food service, all inmates at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center and the Sussex Community Corrections Center and nearly 250 inmates at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution.**
- Most Probationer visits with Probation Officers were transitioned to phone check-ins in March to support social distancing measures.

In addition, the DOC has temporarily suspended in-person prison programming to reduce the movement of people into facilities and movement of groups of people within facilities. Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, have been transitioned to a virtual video format. Inmates continue to have outside recreation opportunities within their confined areas and continue to have access to phones to stay in regular contact with their loved ones. DOC is also expanding the use of electronic tablets among the inmate population, where available.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19 and read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases by visiting <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.

-END-